

## Inquiry Core: Global Human Perspectives

Submitting a course for inclusion in CSU's Inquiry Core Curriculum is an opportunity to think creatively about how you can spark students' curiosity and help them see the value of the knowledge and methods of your discipline.

### Inquiry Core Curriculum Requirements

All courses in the CSU Inquiry Core Curriculum must be:

- Offered at the 100- or 200-level;
- Accessible and inviting to first-year non-major students;
- Adopt an Inquiry Orientation to design and delivery; and
- Include one or more Signature Assignments

### Global Human Perspectives Requirements

All courses fulfilling the "Global Human Perspectives" requirement must:

- Meet OT-36 *Arts & Humanities* Learning Outcomes
- Develop and assess the Core Competencies of *Critical Thinking, Intercultural Knowledge & Competence, and Written or Oral Communication*
- Primarily focus on perspectives from one or more societies of Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East

### Instructions for Completion

- Complete this document in Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you find that you cannot enter any additional text in a textbox, it is because you are using an incompatible PDF reader.
- Include the Core Curriculum Syllabus Statement in your syllabus
- Attach this completed document, your syllabus, and an overview of your signature assignment(s) in Curriculog.

[The CSU Core Curriculum Handbook](#)

Contact the Core Curriculum Director: [corecurriculum@csuohio.edu](mailto:corecurriculum@csuohio.edu)

Course Code & Title

## OT36 Outcome Mapping

For each OT36 learning outcome provided in the left column, indicate the following:

- (a) How the course embeds the outcome.
- (b) How student achievement of the outcome will be assessed.
- (c) Where in the syllabus, signature assignment overview, or other provided documentation the embedding and assessing of the outcome is evidenced.

OT36 Outcome	(a) Course Embed	(b) Assessment of Outcome	(c) Evidence of (a) and (b)
<p><b>Basic Knowledge.</b> Employ principles, terminology, and methods from disciplines in the arts and humanities</p>			
<p><b>Textual Analysis.</b> Analyze, interpret, and/or evaluate primary works that are products of the human imagination and critical thought.</p>			
<p><b>Contextual Examination.</b> Reflect on the creative process of products of the human imagination and critical thought.</p>			

OT36 Outcome	(a) Course Embed	(b) Assessment of Outcome	(c) Evidence of (a) and (b)
<b>Breadth.</b> Explain relationships among cultural and/or historical contexts.			
<b>Communication.</b> Convey concepts and evidence related to humanistic endeavors clearly and effectively.			

## Global Human Perspectives Emphasis

On what society or societies of Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East does the course focus?

How does the course provide students with a focus on the perspective(s) of the primary society/societies being studied?

## Inquiry Orientation

Core Curricular courses are expected to take an inquiry orientation toward course design, organization, and instructional method. While complete “Inquiry Based Education” is not required, courses should include the following two components:

- Organize learning around the exploration and investigation of problems or questions that would be of interest to and engaging for first year students;
- Require students to engage, individually or collaboratively, in some of the stages of inquiry.

[Learn more about designing for inquiry](#)

**Major Problems/Questions:** What are the major problems and/or questions that frame your course?

**Stages of Inquiry:** How will students be engaged in the inquiry process in the course? What activities and/or assignments will be used to develop students’ ability to engage in inquiry?

## Core Competency Mapping

The core competencies required are provided below. For each competency, do the following:

- (a) Indicate which two learning outcomes the course will especially focus on developing and assessing through one or more signature assignments. The available learning outcomes can be found on the [CSU Core Competencies](#) page of the [Core Curriculum Handbook](#).
- (b) Indicate how each identified learning outcome is embedded or understood in the course.

[CSU Core Competencies](#)

Core Competency 1: Critical Thinking	
Core Competency Learning Outcome	Associated Course Learning Outcome <i>and/or</i> description of how the outcome is embedded in the course
Core Competency 2: Intercultural Knowledge & Competence	
Core Competency Learning Outcome	Associated Course Learning Outcome <i>and/or</i> description of how the outcome is embedded in the course
Core Competency 3:	
Core Competency Learning Outcome	Associated Course Learning Outcome <i>and/or</i> description of how the outcome is embedded in the course

## Signature Assignments

Each core curricular course is required to have at least one signature assignment and to assess all chosen core curriculum learning outcomes through signature assignments. All signature assignments include two parts: some form of authentic assessment (i.e., not an exam or quiz) and a personal reflection related to the assignment and/or course.

To complete this section, do the following:

- (a) Indicate the signature assignment(s) of the course, briefly describing it.
- (b) Indicate which core competency learning outcome(s) the signature assignment will assess and how it will do so.
- (c) Provide at least one of the reflection prompts you will provide students. You are welcome to provide students with options but need only provide one possibility here.

*If you are using more than three signature assignments, include an additional attachment in Curriculog answering the same prompts as below for each additional signature assignment.*

[Learn more about Signature Assignments](#)

Signature Assignment Name/Description	Core Competencies Assessed and how	Reflection Prompt

## Inquiry Pathway

Core Curricular courses may be included in one or more established [Inquiry Pathways](#). Core courses are not required to be included in any pathway.

If you would like this course to be included in a pathway, answer the questions below.

Pathway:
How will the course meaningfully and substantively contribute to the pathway theme?
Pathway:
How will the course meaningfully and substantively contribute to the pathway theme?





# REL/HIS 239: The Bible & History

Fall 2025  
[\*Days, Time\*]

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Matt Jackson-McCabe

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## OUR CENTRAL QUESTIONS

Though Christians and Jews look to the Bible for guidance in the present, much of its content consists of narratives about distant pasts. At the heart of the Bible lies an epic history of ancient Israel set in the context of a larger world history. Tales of the first humans are followed by stories of ongoing political and religious conflict in the ancient Middle East and, in the New Testament, by multiple accounts of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Why is the Bible so profoundly concerned with history? Who wrote the Bible? How did the historical contexts of its writers—their own social and political experiences, cultural assumptions, and religious beliefs—shape their tellings of history? How do its versions of events compare with those found in other ancient sources? What is the relationship between history as told in the Bible and history as reconstructed by modern, critical historians?

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Speak and write about the Bible in ways appropriate to the critical, humanistic discipline of Religious Studies.
2. Interpret biblical texts as expressions of a diverse and evolving ancient culture rooted in particular social and historical contexts.
3. Analyze the Bible using basic methods of its critical study (e.g., historical criticism, source criticism, literary criticism)
4. Formulate your own working, evidence-based conclusions on key problems in the critical study of the Bible and its relationship to history.

## COURSE FORMAT

This is not a lecture course. While there will be periodic direct instruction, sessions will typically revolve around small group discussion of significant issues relevant to the critical study of the Bible and history. The course is organized in six modules. Students will complete an assessment for each module. Two of the Modules will also include essay assignments requiring critical analyses of biblical texts (Modules 2 and 6).

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* Second Edition, with new Epilogue. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019.

Harold W. Attridge, ed. *HarperCollins Study Bible: Fully Revised and Updated. Student Edition.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

\*All other readings provided on Blackboard.

### CSU CORE INQUIRY CURRICULUM PROGRAM

This course is part of Cleveland State University's Inquiry Core Curriculum program. The Inquiry Core Curriculum program aims to provide students with a well-rounded education, emphasizing a diverse range of methods of inquiry and essential skills for success after graduation. This course contributes to the program by fulfilling the Global Human Perspectives requirement. In fulfilling that requirement, this course will provide you opportunity to develop the following core competencies: Critical Thinking, Intercultural Knowledge & Competence, Written Communication.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

There are four basic requirements for the course. Each one is weighted differently for the purposes of the determination of final course grades:

1. *Guided Preparation Assignments* (25% of final grade). Sessions will often include targeted questions on the readings to prepare you both for in-class discussions and for the module assessments. **Answers must be submitted on Blackboard prior to class.** These assignments will be graded on a pass-fail basis, with a "pass" being given to assignments that (i) are submitted on time AND (ii) show clear evidence of genuine engagement with assigned texts and issues. A pass rate of 90% or higher will receive full credit for this portion of the grade; lower pass rates will be reflected directly in lower grades (e.g., 75% pass rate = 75% of the credit for this portion of the final grade).
2. *Attendance* (10% of final grade). This portion of the grade is based directly on the percentage of class meetings attended.
3. *Module Assessments* (35% of final grade). While the modules often build on each other, each concludes with its own targeted assessment. These will come in various forms (sample textual analyses, objective questions, written questions) depending on the nature of the relevant material.
4. *Argumentative Essays* (30% of final grade). Two modules require you to develop your thinking on key issues more systematically by writing an essay that develops and supports a thesis relevant to the critical, historical analysis of biblical texts. Each essay will be worth 15% of your final course grade.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY & CODE OF CONDUCT

A core purposes of a Liberal Arts education is to help students develop their ability and their confidence to think critically and creatively for themselves. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind—which is to say, presenting someone's (or in the case of AI, *something's*) ideas as though they were your own—fundamentally undermine this purpose. For that reason, this course has a zero-tolerance policy on any such acts. Consequences will range anywhere from a zero for the assignment to an F for the course. It will also include a record of the incident being recorded with the CSU's Community Standards & Advocacy Office.

It is ultimately **your responsibility** to ensure that you are meeting CSU's standards for academic integrity. For more information on CSU policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, and their

consequences, click this link: <https://www.csuohio.edu/academic-integrity/academic-integrity>. **If there is any question about whether a particular action (e.g., use of a source, etc.) might count as plagiarism or cheating, the time to ask is before you submit the assignment. Once an assignment has been submitted, it will be too late!**

### HELP WITH BASIC NEEDS—ACADEMIC AND OTHERWISE

We learn not merely as one-dimensional students, but as whole human beings. It can be challenging to learn and to perform to your full ability if you are having trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. CSU has a variety of resources available to connect students to whatever basic resources they need. For more information, click here:

<https://www.csuohio.edu/liftupvikes/liftupvikes>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### MODULE 1: The Bible and History: Problems, Questions, and Critical Inquiry

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
1	Orientation	
2	Case Study: The Judah-Moabite wars (9 <sup>th</sup> century BCE)	HCSB 2 Kings 3:4-27 Mesha Stele
3	Reading the Bible Critically	Rodrigues and Harding, “Introduction to the Study of Religion”
4	Historians & the Bible	Friedman, Introduction
<b>Module Assessment</b>		

### MODULE 2. The First Humans (Genesis 1-11): Origin Stories in Historical & Cross-Cultural Context

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
1	Ancient Near Eastern Origin Myths in Cross-Cultural Perspective	Coogan, “Creations” “Two Brothers and their Grandmother” (Creation Story of the North American Seneca)
2	The Biblical Story of the First Humans	HCSB Genesis 1-11
3	Whose Story (part 1)? A brief history of ancient Israel, 1200-722 BCE	Friedman, ch. 1
4	Source Criticism of Genesis 1-11	Friedman, ch. 2

5	Whose Story (part 2)? The Authorship of the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy)	Friedman, ch. 3
<b>Module Assessment Essay 1</b>		

MODULE 3. The Davidic Dynasty & its Religion: The Historical Context of Biblical Narrative

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
1	Case Study: The Reform of King Josiah (622 BCE)	HCSB 2 Kings 22-23
2	Contextualizing Josiah: A brief history of the kingdom of Judah, 722-587 BCE	Friedman, ch. 4
3	Was Ancient Israel Monotheistic?	Stanley, "The Supernatural World"
4	The Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy-2 Kings) in Historical Context	Friedman, ch. 5
<b>Module Assessment</b>		

MODULE 4: Prophecy as Historical Interpretation: Religion & Politics in Ancient Israel

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
1	The Social Realities of Prophecy in Ancient Israel	Stanley, "The World of the Prophets"
2	Jeremiah & the Reform of Josiah	Friedman, ch. 6
3	Case Study: Jeremiah on the Jerusalem Temple & Foreign Policy	HCSB Jeremiah 7:1-15 and 26:1-24
4	Jeremiah & the Deuteronomistic History	Friedman, ch. 7
<b>Module Assessment</b>		

MODULE 5: The Bible's Theory of History: The Historical Narrative of a Post-Exilic People

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
1	The Post-Exilic Context of the Grand Narrative (Genesis-Kings): The History of Judah, 587-400 BCE	Friedman, chs. 8 and 13

2	Israel's Origin Story	HCSB Genesis 9-10, 12, 15, 17, 27-28, 32, 49
3	Exodus, Torah & Promised Land	HCSB Exodus 1-3, 19-20; Deuteronomy 28-31; Joshua 1:1-18; 11:16-23
4	The Rise of the Davidic Monarchy	HCSB: Judges 1-4; 1 Samuel 3-9; 15-16; 2 Samuel 1-7
5	The History of Kingship & the Exile	HCSB 1 Kings 1-6, 11-15; 17:1-18:12; 21, 24-25
6	Past as Prologue: History & the Future in Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophecy	HCSB Jeremiah 31:31-40; 32:36-33:26; Ezekiel 37; Isaiah 45; Haggai 1-2
<b>Module Assessment</b>		

#### MODULE 6: The Problem of the Historical Jesus

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b>
1	The Historical Context of Jesus & Christian Origins: Judah, 400 BCE-200 CE	White, "Entering the World of Jesus"
2	Jesus: From Historical Figure to Literary Character	Ehrman, "The Historical Jesus: Sources, Problems and Methods," pp. 238-45 PPT Lecture: "From Oral Tradition to Written Gospel"
3	The Problem of the Sources	PPT Lecture: "Written Sources Behind the Gospels: Source & Redaction Criticism" Gospel Parallels 2: Jesus and his Disciples
4	Reconstructing the Historical Jesus: Methods & Critical Criteria	Ehrman, "The Historical Jesus: Sources, Problems, and Methods," pp. 245-53
5	Case Study: The Birth of Jesus	HCSB Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-3
<b>Module Assessment</b> <b>Essay 2</b>		

## REL/HIS 239: The Bible & History

### Signature Assignment Descriptions

#### **Signature Assignment #1—MODULE 1 ASSESSMENT**

Competency Assessed: *Intercultural Knowledge* (understanding cultural complexity; suspension of value judgements)

Assignment Summary:

The Bible (2 Kings 3:4-27) presents an account of a war that took place in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BCE between the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Moab—a neighboring people whose religious culture differed significantly from Israel's. An ancient stele known variously as the Mesha Stele or the Moabite Stone preserves another account of the same events, but from the point of view of Moabite worshippers of the god Chemosh rather than—as in the Bible—ancient Israelite worshippers of the god Yahweh. While clearly reflecting the same historical conflict, the two accounts conflict substantially both in the presentation of particular events and in more general conclusions regarding the larger meaning of those events.

For this assignment, students are asked to apply their newly learned “religious studies” approach to the production of a neutral, descriptive comparison of the two accounts. Specifically, they will be asked to suspend value judgments and personal religious beliefs in order to consider how both accounts are shaped by the cultural (esp. religious) assumptions and interests of their respective writers—and to begin to consider how cultural difference and human creativity complicate the construction of histories. Students will begin by working on this problem in-class in small groups, but each student will ultimately complete the final written assignment individually.

Sample Reflection Prompts:

1. How did the adoption of a Religious Studies approach enhance or otherwise impact your experience of comparing two accounts of the same events—one from the Bible, and one reflecting a different cultural and religious perspective?
2. What are the two most important things you learned by doing this assignment?

Assessment: Assignments will be assessed in accord with the relevant portions of the Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric

#### **Signature Assignment #2—MODULE 6 ESSAY**

Competencies Assessed: *Written Communication* (context appropriate & discipline specific exploration); *Critical Thinking* (critical consideration of a problem & statement of specific position)

Assignment Summary:

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke each include detailed accounts of the genealogy and birth of Jesus. While fundamentally different from one another, both stories identify superhuman as well as human actors and forces at work in the events they narrate, and assign broad religious significance to those events, in line with the cultural assumptions and values of the first-century Jesus movement.

For this assignment students will be asked to formulate and defend a position on the question of what particular elements of either story, if any, can be safely considered “historical” (i.e., as opposed to creative religious fiction) when the stories are analyzed from a critical, religious studies perspective. More specifically, they will be asked to apply the particular historical-critical considerations and criteria introduced in the module to a comparative, historical analysis of the two accounts. Like the Module 1 assignments, this assignment will involve a combination of small-group collaboration and individual work.

Assessment: Assignments will be assessed in accord with the relevant portions of the Written Communication VALUE Rubric and the Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric.

Sample Reflection Prompts:

1. What specific steps did you take to ensure your essay was written appropriately for the discipline of religious studies? (*Written Communication*)
2. Critical thinking—that is, the ability to think carefully for oneself about issues and information rather than rushing to uninformed judgments about it — is generally viewed as one of hallmark traits of the educated person. It is also one of the basic learning outcomes associated with this course as part of CSU’s Inquiry Core Curriculum. How has your ability to think critically about religion in general and the Bible in particular changed throughout this course? (*Critical Thinking*)